

## Citizen's Excellence in Community Involvement Award Recognizing Citizen Participation

Nominee: William Parker, Councilor, Fourth District, City of Birmingham, AL

We are pleased to nominate Councilor William Parker, from the Birmingham City Council, Birmingham, AL for the *Citizen Excellence in Community Involvement Award Recognizing Citizen Participation*.

Councilor Parker has worked tirelessly to elevate the concerns of the citizens of North Birmingham. His leadership ~~into an atmosphere that ensures their direct involvement in EPA's activities and decision making, assists them in capacity building and with a high level of interaction~~ as EPA works to address a myriad of environmental concerns. EPA Region 4 moving forward with a coordinated approach to evaluate the environmental condition and potential ~~environmental impacts to~~ in certain the communities areas of the North Birmingham, Fairmont, Collegeville, and Harriman Park neighborhoods, as well as portions of Five Mile Creek and Harriman Park ditch, located in and around Birmingham, Jefferson County, Alabama. ~~This effort, which includes air, water, soil and waste issues, is known as the North Birmingham Environmental Collaboration Project. A major component of this work is the Superfund response known as the 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue Ssite.~~

Councilor Parker's mother, the late Maxine Parker, served on the Birmingham City Council and represented the community until her death in late 2013. Mrs. Parker had begun a process for seeking solutions to the environmental, economic and social impacts that the residents in her district were facing. Shortly before her death, she visited Spartanburg, SC and had planned to bring community members from her area to Spartanburg to see firsthand what could be done to revitalize their community.

Upon being given the opportunity to complete his mother's unexpired term, Mr. Parker took up the mantle and begin to implement Mrs. Parker's vision. In January 2014, he took a large group of community stakeholders to Spartanburg. The tour and meetings with the collaborative partners from the ReGenesis Project set the stage for ensuring that the North Birmingham Community stakeholders knew that they could affect change in their community. This approach also helped to ensure constructive participation of the impacted community in the environmental response activities being sought by EPA. As well, EPA's Superfund Program initiated an Integrated Assessment Program that further empowered the community to understand environmental and public health impacts, and set priorities for revitalization of North Birmingham. During this process, Mr. Parker assigned a consultant that was born in the community to work directly with the community as they organized. This provided a great compliment to the work that EPA was doing with the community. The Northern Birmingham Community Coalition was born out of this process. ~~In~~ as well as their 2015 Northern Birmingham Revitalization Action Plan was completed ~~using~~ under the resources provided by the Superfund Program. Through support from Mr. Parker, his consultant and others within the City of Birmingham, the Coalition has received its nonprofit status and has begun to apply for grants to support activities and priorities laid out in their Action Plan.

Concurrently with all of these activities, EPA's Superfund Program has been initiated a Superfund response action that includes cleanup of 400+ remediated residential properties, schools, day care facilities and parks that are contaminated with arsenic, lead and PAHs from industrial operations dating back 100 years. ....

This process has not be easy, particularly in terms of communicating with the effected community and obtaining access. Mr. Parker has been instrumental in working closely with the Supefund Program and ensuring that residents understand the process that EPA is undertaking and that their concerns are addressed. He has worked with EPA to assist in providing support in innovative way to help obtain access for sampling and cleanup. He provided support from students through a Hands-on-Birmingham event to EPA's door to door activities to get access agreements signed. Because of this effort EPA was able to get 1200 agreements signed to begin sampling.

Through discussions with our Regional Administrator and Mr. Parker, we began a Regional IWG effort focused on North Birmingham in August 2014. The Coalition was poised and ready to participate, having been exposed to Spartanburg and developing their action plan. In January 2015, a North Birmingham IWG Meeting was held in Atlanta, GA. This meeting was attended by over 140 individuals, most from Birmingham as a result of Mr. Parker's efforts to empower the community. The Coalition members participated, including presenting their Action Plan. In a meeting where the City of Birmingham was presenting its vision and needs assessment, the Coalition also provided their vision for the future and have been active participants in the process.

To further secure support for the revitalization of North Birmingham, Councilor Parker secured support from the Clinton Global Initiative in August 2014. President Clinton wrote in a blog about the Birmingham project "....smart government policies can dramatically improve lives and livelihoods, especially when they partner with businesses and community groups interested in the effort." The Clinton Global Initiative brought more resources to the table, including foundations who are interested in helping the community realize their vision.

Frequently we hear from the community that they now see that there can be a positive future for their community. They are well educated and empowered, and are compassionate about the work EPA and the City are doing to make their lives better. The leadership, dedication and creativity of Councilor Parker is a key to the success that we are seeing in working towards securing the community's mission of a safer, cleaner and more vibrant environment that offers a strong quality of life.

Councilor Parker has worked with the community closely to identify concerns and needs in regard to reduction of pollution, health and safety and economic development. Some of the highlights of his result- driven approach include working with EPA and Alabama Brownfields program to assist in creation of a Birmingham Brownfields Task Force, bringing training into the community on community engagement in air permitting process, round table on air monitor networks, and construction of the Maxine Parker Vehicular Bridge to address ingress and egress issues due to major roads blocked by train traffic.

Councilor Parker is also working with his fellow City Councilors to address the same issues in their districts and is bringing them and members of the communities that they represent into the conversation. He is a vital member on EPA's team and insures that his community and City has a voice

in matters of air quality, site investigations and cleanup, water quality and stormwater control, NEPA, EJ, RCRA and sustainable redevelopment.

